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PROF. W. ARNDT, *Managing Editor pro tem.*, 801 De Mun Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

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CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, St. Louis, Mo.

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

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JULY, 1927.

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The Virgin Birth of Christ.

Essay read before a conference by REV. G. ALBERT SCHULZE
and published by request.

V.

The disgrace of being the earliest known impugner of the Virgin Birth falls upon the head of Cerinthus, a contemporary of the Apostle John. Cerinthus taught that Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism received the *ἄνω Χριστός*, "the Christ [from] above," who, however, departed from Him before His suffering. Soon after Cerinthus, the Ebionites, a Jewish sect, appeared upon the scene as champions of the purely human origin of our Lord. They taught that He was a mere man, whom God had elected to the Messiahship because of His extraordinary piety. In the so-called Ebionite gospel the chapters in which the evangelists teach the Virgin Birth were omitted. The Gnostics, many of them at least, could not find any room in their monstrous speculations for the Virgin Birth. They either denied the true humanity of Christ or else represented Him as a human being upon whom the *ἄνω Χριστός* descended at baptism. Of course, we find Marcion (ca. 100) and the Docetae on the side of the enemy. The philosopher Celsus (second century) delighted in pouring out his contempt upon this doctrine in particular and thereby came into conflict with Origen (*Contra Celsum*). Celsus was what the psalmist would no doubt call a brutish man; he called Jesus a bastard and spread the blasphemy that He was the offspring of an illicit union between Mary and a soldier named Panthera. It would seem that Satan finds a fiendish pleasure in stirring up men to renew the attacks of these ancient slanderers from time to time. Luther, as we have already heard, had his troubles with men who departed from the Scriptures also on this point. Schwenckfeld, *e. g.*, taught a "deification [*Vergottung*] of the body of Christ." The Anabaptists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have cherished the rather peculiar notion that Christ brought a body

along with Him from heaven. After the days of Luther there was a lull in the storm. In the last century and a half, however, the waves of opposition have almost without ceasing rolled high. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* says: "In the latter part of the eighteenth century an assault on the doctrine was made by Thomas Paine (*Age of Reason*). Voltaire and most of the Deists and rationalists declared for the natural explanation of Jesus' birth." De Wette (1780—1849) calls Matthew's and Luke's narratives of Christ's birth "poetic symbols of religious ideas." The opening sentence of Renan's *Life of Christ* reads: "Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, which before his time had no celebrity. . . . His father Joseph and his mother Mary were people in humble circumstances." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 5.) Schleiermacher likewise had stirred up the troubled waters. The storm increased in fury when Pfarrer Schrempf, in Lenzendorf, Wurttemberg, was deposed from office in 1892 because of his refusal to use the Apostolic Creed at the administration of Holy Baptism. Professor Harnack sprang to his defense. And since then hardly a year has passed in which no new attack has been launched upon this important doctrine. To-day things have come to such a pass that in Brockhaus's *Lexikon* the brazen statement is made: "*Nach der urspruenglichen Ueberlieferung hat Maria Jesum ihrem Gatten Joseph in rechtmaessiger Ehe geboren,*" and that countless pulpit orators and theological professors repeat over and over again that the Virgin Birth is unacceptable to theology, to science, to history, to sound human reason. One cannot but shudder at the blasphemous tone of the remarks made by some of these men, who would still lay claim to the name Christian. Soltan, professor in Zabern, Alsace, in his *Geburtsgeschichte Jesu Christi*, says: "*Wer noch weiterhin fordert, dass ein evangelischer Christ glauben sollte an die Worte: 'Empfangen von dem Heiligen Geist, geboren aus Maria der Jungfrau,' der macht sich wissentlich zum Mitschuldigen an einer Suende wider den Heiligen Geist des wahren Evangeliums.*" (*Syn.-Ber. d. Mich.-Dist.*, 41, p. 27.) R. J. Campbell says: "The credibility and significance of Christianity are in no way affected by the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, otherwise than that the belief tends to put a barrier between Jesus and the race and to make Him something that cannot properly be called human. . . . It operates as a hindrance to spiritual religion and a real living faith in Jesus." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 5.) Kaftan stamps the Virgin Birth as a doctrine "having no religious value." (Pieper, *Dogm.*, III, 366.) Fosdick declares with reference to his

denial of the Virgin Birth that he is "far from thinking that he has given up anything vital in the New Testament's attitude toward Jesus." (*The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith*, p. 10.) In cyclopedias (e. g., *Encycl. Biblica*, Cheyne), in commentaries, sermons, pamphlets, and the daily press we meet this damnable heresy. It has representatives among the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and other prominent denominations. Hastings, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, has a long list of publications directed against the Virgin Birth.

If men of this type were to be regarded as representative of the true Church, we certainly could not derive very much encouragement from their testimony. However, a brief review of the position of those whom we honor as eminent men in the Church of Jesus will strengthen us in our faith. In the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* we read: "The doctrine that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost received its first authoritatively formulated statement in the earliest Roman creed, not later than 150 A. D., and probably earlier (in its earliest form, adopted by Harnack, about 140, by Zahn about 120, by Kattenbusch about 100)" (sub "Virgin Birth"). Orr, in his *Virgin Birth of Christ*, says: "Apart from the Ebionites, or narrower section of Jewish Christians, and a few Gnostic sects, no body of Christians in early times is known to have existed who did not accept as part of their faith the birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary, while, on the other hand, we have the amplest evidence that this belief was part of the general faith of the Church." (p. 138.) Ignatius (ca. 110) accepted it; he says to the Ephesians: "Our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost." (Orr, *V. B.*, 144.) Aristides (ca. 125), in his *Apology*, gives this as a part of the Christian faith, that the Son of God "from a Hebrew Virgin took and clad himself with flesh." (*L. u. W.*, 68, 133.) The great men of the early Church were ever ready to fight for this article, e. g., against the Gnostic sects. They attached great significance to it. Orr says: "The doctrine of the Virgin Birth was brought into practical use as guaranteeing, on the one side, the true humanity, but not less, on the other, the divine Sonship of Jesus. This is the ground taken by Irenaeus, by Tertullian, by Clement of Alexandria, by Hippolytus, by Origen — by all who discuss the subject." (*V. B.*, 148.) He quotes a number of pertinent passages from the Fathers. The position of the Christians of the first centuries was shared by those of the following.

We have the confession of the Virgin Birth in the Apostles' Creed, in the Nicene Creed, in that of Chalcedon (451). Schaff-Herzog: "The traditional doctrine remains for nearly fifteen hundred years the common, well-nigh undisputed tradition of the Church, even among the Arians and the Socinians" (sub "Virgin Birth"). In the Lutheran Church the Virgin Birth has been taught since the days of Luther. We find repeated reference to it in our symbolical books. (*Conc. Trigl.*, 821, 12; 1017, 6; 1023, 24; etc.) In other churches, too, there are great hosts who cling to the doctrine. Orr mentions these men: Godet, Bishop Lightfoot, Sir Wm. Ramsay, Canon Hensen, Philip Schaff, Dr. Briggs. In our day Fosdick and others have contributed their share toward revealing that among Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and others there are still many thousands who confess with us: "I believe in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

VI.

Rebuttal of the arguments advanced against the Virgin Birth is of little importance to the Christian so far as he is a Christian. For the Christian bases his faith upon the infallible Word of God and has the assurance that the very gates of hell shall not prevail against the teaching of the Lord. But we are not yet one hundred per cent. Christian. The old Adam within us is inclined to doubt the truth and occasionally needs to be shown his woeful ignorance. Over against the enemy, too, a reasonable amount of apologetics may at times render valuable service. We shall, therefore, in the concluding chapter consider some of the arguments most frequently brought forward by our opponents.

The supernatural element of the Virgin Birth is sometimes urged as proof of its impossibility. Matthew Arnold: "I do not believe in the Virgin Birth because it involves a miracle, and miracles *do not happen*. I have no place for them in my intellectual scheme." (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 12; quoted from *Literature and Dogma*.) Men of such broadness of mind that they must be classified as Deists, pantheists, evolutionists, and extreme rationalists cannot logically find any room for the Virgin Birth in their religious systems. The man that denies all supernatural phenomena is to be pitied; he is doing violence to sound reason. In connection with the denial of this doctrine there appears an element which otherwise is absent, or at least less prominent, namely, the evil and corrupt will of natural man, the inborn enmity toward God and His holy Word. Our Lord is a "stumbling-block to the Jews and

to the Greeks foolishness." In consequence of this natural hatred the sinner cannot think straight when questions concerning Christ arise; else he would admit the possibility of the Virgin Birth. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them, . . . even His eternal power and Godhead." Rom. 1, 19 f. Only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God." Ps. 14, 1. If there is a God, the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, a Supreme Being whose dominion is universal and absolutely illimitable, it is certainly an act of arrogance for any man on earth to presume to determine *a priori* the possibilities of His relation to created things and His operation in the universe. Nature, reason, and the unanimous conviction of all nations teach: There is a God. Grant the existence of God, and you will have to proceed a step farther and grant the possibility of miracles. And if miracles can be performed, must we not, then, admit the reasonableness of the Virgin Birth?

There are some who insist that the Virgin Birth can be accepted without believing that it was a miracle. Augusta Gaskell, in *Science: an Aid to Faith*, endeavors (in her own words) "to prove that the belief in the physiological event of the Virgin Birth is entirely congruous with the most advanced findings of science and that modern science affirms nothing that discredits the doctrine of the Virgin Birth." (*Theol. Monthly*, 3, 72.) She draws attention to the fact that in nature parthenogenesis is not by any means an unknown phenomenon. She says: "G. Bohn produced artificial parthenogenesis in *Strongylocentrotus lividus* eggs, exposing them to radium rays; and Loeb caused the eggs of *Arbacia* and *Chaetopterus* to segment by exposing them to ultraviolet radiations from a quartz mercury arc." But, I ask, what relation is there between these interesting phenomena and the birth of Christ? Christ is not a *Strongylocentrotus lividus* nor a *Chaetopterus* nor anything of that nature. The Scriptures describe His birth as a miracle wrought by the Holy Ghost and not by ultraviolet rays. You cannot explain away the Virgin Birth by means of biological data of this kind. However, as has been remarked in the preceding chapter, one might grant that the fact of parthenogenesis in the natural world supplies us with proof of the possibility of the parthenogenesis of Christ.

"Schleiermacher affirms the natural paternity of Joseph, but accounts for the archetypal nature of Jesus' consciousness through a creative divine deed in His birth, by means of which the original idea of man became realized." (*New Schaff-Herzog Encycl.*) Schleiermacher has numerous imitators. Orr mentions Keim,

Beyschlag, and the Ritschlians Kaftan, Loofs, Haering. These gentlemen grant that there was something miraculous connected with the birth of Jesus; however, they do not concede a physical miracle, but only a miracle of a spiritual, moral, psychic nature. According to this theory, God poured a pure, immaculate soul into Christ's body, which was begotten and born according to the laws of nature. But that is not the teaching of Scripture. The Bible ascribes holiness to Christ, holiness of body and soul, not merely sanctification, but perfect sanctity ("that Holy Thing"). Christ knew no sin. The Bible says: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2, 9; and in scores of passages it calls Him the Son of God. Granted that Christ is holy, absolutely holy, the theory of Schleiermacher and his followers collapses. Orr correctly says: "It is a corollary from the known laws of the connection of mind and body that every mind needs an organism fitted to it. If the mind of man is the product of a new cause, the brain, which is the instrument of the mind, must share its peculiar origin. You cannot put a human mind into a simian brain." (*V. B.*, p. 199.) If we put Schleiermacher's brain into the skull of an ape, would this monster be another Schleiermacher? And what would result if we were to put a sinless soul in a sinful body? We cannot but say that those who grant that Christ had no sin must concede that He has a sinless body; and if they make this concession, they must continue along this line and admit that His body had a supernatural origin. The miraculous element in the person of Christ cannot possibly cease at any intermediate point of His existence. It must reach back to the very beginning of His being; indeed, beyond that point. Of course, if Christ's sinlessness was merely relative, Schleiermacher's explanation may seem satisfactory. But Schleiermacher and his ilk assume that Christ has a perfect spirit. We retort: A perfect spirit cannot dwell in an imperfect organism.

Higher critics have discovered a very simple way of ridding themselves of this inconvenient doctrine of the Virgin Birth. They simply expunge every Scriptural statement that does not harmonize with their views, either denying the genuineness of the first chapters of Matthew and Luke or else attacking the integrity of the text. Meyer, in his *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (8th edition, Bern. Weiss), says: "*Die Echtheit des ganzen ersten und zweiten Kapitels ist bestritten oder wenigstens verdaechtigt worden von Williams, Stroth, Ammon, Eichhorn u.a.*" Wellhausen's *Das Evangelium Lucae, uebersetzt und erkluert* begins with ch. 3, 1.

Others, *e. g.*, Pfeiderer, Schmiedel, Usener, Hillmann, J. Weiss, Cheyne, Conybeare, Harnack, excise certain parts from the text, *e. g.*, in Luke's gospel, vv. 34 and 35. Moffatt, in his New Testament, interpolates words that make Joseph the father of Jesus. (*L. u. W.*, 70, 146.) The devil can take a good, long nap if he can persuade us Christians to follow this method; for in that event the story of the Virgin Birth would be a plain invention, having no basis whatsoever in Holy Writ. But we ought to think twice before accepting the word of the higher critics. The opening chapters of Matthew and Luke are in all MSS. Concerning Matthew, Meyer writes: "*Alle Codices und Versionen enthalten die beiden Kapitel.*" "Much has been made of a reading of the Old Syriac gospels or *Evangeleion da Mepharresche*, in a palimpsest found by Miss Agnes Smith Lewis in February, 1892. In this MS. Matt. 1, 16 reads as follows: 'Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary, the virgin, begat Jesus, who is called the Christ.' It seems evident that in this MS. 'begat' is used here in the conventional sense of 'became the legal father of.' For in this MS., in vv. 18—25, is the same clear account of the Virgin Birth as we read in other innumerable MSS. This is not so strange; for according to Jer. 22, 30 Jeconiah really had no son, and we have therefore to understand that he whom he 'begat,' according to Matt. 1, 12, was simply his legal son. Similarly must be understood 1 Chron. 3, 17." (F. Pierce Ramsay, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 51.) The same must be said about Luke. We find the first chapters of these two evangelists in the Vulgate of St. Jerome, the Peshito, in all the Coptic versions, in the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (ca. 160); even Celsus refers to the Biblical account of the Virgin Birth over and over again and uses it as a source of ammunition. (Orr, *V. B.*, p. 42.) There is no reason either why we should look upon Luke 1, 34. 35 as spurious. The passage is contained in all MSS. and all translations, the only exception being the so-called Ebionite gospel. And shall we be so foolish as to accept the testimony of that gospel, the very first verse of which is all wrong, reading as it does: "It came to pass in the days of Herod, king of Judea, that John baptized with the baptism of repentance," and which is totally unreliable otherwise too? If the story of Christ's birth were not in the Scriptures, we could not explain its origin among the early Christians. Furthermore, it seems almost unbelievable that the gospel should nowhere refer to Christ's birth. In every chapter, mention is made of miracles connected with Him. Since the writers of the gospel report the events of His unique life, His unique death, His unique victory

over the grave so explicitly and accurately, one cannot but deem it self-understood that they make at least some reference to the beginning of His life. The denials of higher critics are not motivated by critical considerations, but by dogmatic interests. That is evident; else they would not deny the existence of witnesses for the Virgin Birth.

The opposition does not content itself with flat denial, but offers explanations of the origin of the so-called myth. It cannot but engage in ventures of that kind since it is undeniable that Christians have for many centuries believed and taught that Jesus was born of the Virgin. Chiefly two explanations are offered: 1) the theory of a Jewish mythological origin, 2) that of a pagan origin. Both theories have insuperable difficulties even from the historical point of view.

Let us first take up the assertion that the story of Christ is of Jewish invention. The matter is explained thus: The character of Jesus, His mighty words, His great deeds, made such a deep impression upon His followers that, unintelligent as they were, they inclined to the belief that He was the promised Messiah. Soon the question arose in their minds: What was the source of His greatness? They recalled having read something in Isaiah about a virgin's son; and they at once jumped at the conclusion: Jesus is that virgin's son. Another explanation runs something like this: The Jews in the course of time, especially in consequence of the Christology developed by Paul, persuaded themselves that Jesus is God. And so they were under the necessity of providing for Him a supernatural entrance into the world. Influenced by their recollection of Is. 7, 14, they arrived at the conviction that their wonderful Leader might, perhaps, be the virgin's son referred to in that passage. Ere long it was generally assumed: Jesus is the son of a virgin. This sounds somewhat plausible. But there is something rotten here. In the first place, it seems more than passing strange that this "myth" developed with such astounding rapidity. The entire Christian Church of the first centuries (excluding the Ebionites, if you want to look upon them as part of the Church) believed and taught the supernatural conception and the virgin birth of our Lord. Nowhere do we meet the faintest trace of a contradiction. Barely twenty-five, thirty years after Christ's death, Matthew and Luke broadcast the story that He was virgin-born. Also this should be considered: At the time of the publication of Matthew's and Luke's gospels there were men still living who had been acquainted with Mary. Now, if Matthew and Luke had published a product of

their own imagination, do you not suppose that their story of the infancy of Christ would have met with instant contradiction from the family of Jesus? For if their words are a free invention, what disgrace falls upon Mary and her Son! Furthermore, the critics, as we have heard, base their opposition to the Virgin Birth to a large extent upon the silence of Paul. If the myth was in process of evolution at his time, we should have reason to expect that he would have known something about it and made some mention of it. The opponents themselves destroy the foundation of their theory, declaring in the same breath that the myth came into being at an early day, and, again, that it was unknown to Paul, the greatest teacher of the day. — Secondly, it can be proved that the Jews did not deem it self-understood at all that their Messiah would be born of a virgin. Edersheim, in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, lists 456 passages which the Jews understood to have a Messianic meaning. Is. 7, 14 is not among them. There is a total lack of evidence that the Jews, who were such sticklers for the purity of matrimony and family life, who looked upon children as gifts of God, who had no order of virgins consecrated to divine worship, had any inclination at all to develop the notion that a virgin might conceive and bear a son. — Not much need be said as to the theory that the myth was evolved from the Christological teaching of St. Paul. This view receives its death-blow from the fact that a written report of the Virgin Birth was extant before him or, at least, contemporaneously with him. And one is once more tempted to inquire whether mythology anywhere knows of a legend that reached its full development in so brief a time, say thirty or thirty-five years.

The difficulties connected with the Jewish mythological theory have moved some critics to search heathen mythology for an explanation. Among the heathen we meet with innumerable legends about profligate gods, who fathered a considerable contingent of demigods and heroes. This blasphemous speculation about the pagan origin of the chaste story of our Savior's birth hardly deserves to be dignified by an attempt at refutation. We shall, however, point out several reasons why we must regard it as totally irrelevant.

The parallels that are said to exist in heathen theology have nothing in common with the Biblical account of Christ's birth. Fosdick says: "According to their faiths, Buddha and Zoroaster, and Lao-tse and Mahavira, were all supernaturally born. . . . When a personality arose so high that men adored him, the ancient world

attributed his superiority to some special divine influence in his generation, and they commonly phrased their faith in terms of miraculous birth. So Pythagoras was called virgin-born, and Plato, and Augustus Caesar, and many more." (Sermon on *Faith and the New Knowledge*, p. 9.) He intimates that the story of Christ's birth lies on the same plane. Others have drawn the same comparison between the Virgin Birth and the old Greek and Latin tales about their idols. Again we say: "Where is the point of contact? Is there any resemblance between the immoralities of heathen gods and the beautifully chaste account of the conception and birth of Jesus? Zeus, *e. g.*, inflamed with the fires of concupiscence, enters the chamber of Danae in the form of a golden rain and begets Perseus. On another occasion he becomes enamored of the beautiful Antiope and approaches her in the form of a Satyr, with the result that she gives birth to twins. Mars falls in love with the vestal virgin Rhea Sylvia, and after a reasonable time she is delivered of Romulus and Remus. These are all instances of a divine paternity. The act of begetting, on the part of the god, is physical and, we might add, bestial. These mothers are not virgins; they have had sexual intercourse with a god. The same observation holds with respect to Perictione, who is said to have become pregnant with Plato in consequence of having had intercourse with a phantom of Apollo. Alexander, much to his mother's displeasure, spread the tale that he had been begotten by a serpent. Caesar Augustus told a similar story about himself. We find similar tales in Egyptian literature. All these grotesque inventions correspond in this, that a god takes the place of a human father. There is nothing in them about a virgin birth. . . . Fosdick mentions the history of Zoroaster." Hastings, in his *Encyclopedia* (sub "Virgin Birth"), has this to say in this connection: "A substance called the 'heavenly glory,' created by Ahura Mazda, mingled with all the stages of birth in Zoroaster's ancestral line. The sacred books tell how his father ate a plant containing the fravashi of Zoroaster, and how both his parents ate food containing his substance. But this leads up to his actual physical generation. So also when the myth tells how the future savior Saoshyat would be born of a girl, this is because some of the semen of Zoroaster, preserved through long ages, will enter her womb." In ancient writings of the Parsees his father is expressly mentioned, a man bearing the name Pourushaspa; and it is reported that Zoroaster was the third of five brothers. (*Luth. Witness*, 41, 327.) — Buddha also figures more or less prominently in the literature of those who ascribe the origin of the Virgin

Birth of Christ to a heathen source. Hastings (*Encycl.*) remarks: "The myths of his birth came into being long after his historical existence, and, being based on transmigration, they expressly contradict his own teaching. Buddha, existing in heaven, decided to be born again on earth for the enlightenment of man. For this purpose he chooses his father and mother, and this puts his virgin birth (commonly asserted also of him) out of court. His mother dreamt that in the shape of a white elephant he entered her womb. The next day this dream was interpreted by several Brahmans, who told Suddhana that he would have a son, the Buddha. The ordinary physical generation is implied, but to this is added the supernatural element of Buddha's preexistence. . . . It is nonsense to speak of his mother as Maya the Virgin." This fable is said to have originated in India long after the spread of the Gospel, and hence cannot have served as a source for Matthew and Luke. — Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, had a father, who, according to tradition, at the age of seventy, married a forty-year-old woman. — Mahavira, the prophet of a Hindu sect, was said to have been born in a supernatural manner; but the story was told long after the birth of Christ. His sect, known as the Jains, who honor him as their prophet, have a literature dating back only to the fifth century. — So in paganism we have not found any trace of a virgin birth.

Among uncivilized peoples of various parts of the world there are weird legends of the pregnancy of virgins caused by swallowing pebbles or blades of grass or by contact with some material object, by bathing, or by the rays of the sun. The statement has been made by some (Hastings, *Encycl.*) that these legends contain the key to the origin of the stories of Christ's birth. But even though fanciful tales of this nature are encountered in Australia and elsewhere, there is no evidence of their circulation before the birth of Jesus or of their having contributed as much as an iota to the rise of the so-called Jesus myth. This observation leads us to our second objection to the assertion that the narrative of Christ's birth developed in heathen soil. There is a complete lack of proof that these heathen vagaries exerted any influence at all upon Jewish thought. There is a link missing in the chain; indeed, the whole chain is non-existent. Even if the stories to which reference has been made were genuine legends of virgin births, we could not but ask what possible connection there exists between this heathen fancy and Jewish thought. Where is the proof that the early Christians were familiar with these tales? Where is the proof that if they were familiar with them, they applied them to Jesus? Even the *New Schaff-Herzog*

(otherwise, as is well known, rather liberal) says: "The connection proposed between the story of the Virgin Birth and stories of supernatural births in the Old Testament, in classic antiquity, in the wide-spread hope of a world-redeemer, has not been established." And Harnack declares: "The Greek or Oriental mythology I should leave entirely out of account; for there is no occasion to suppose that Gentile congregations in the time up to the middle of the second century adopted, despite fixed principles, popular mythical representations." (Orr, *V. B.*, 176.)—New sources have therefore been sought. Cheyne speaks of a "pre-Christian sketch" based upon Babylonian mythology. Cheyne himself never saw this sketch and does not know any one else who did. It is non-existent. He must have been dreaming when he brought it from Babylon. And if it had existed, proof of its influence upon the Jewish spirit is lacking. Moreover, the Babylonian stories that are said to have served as source of the "pre-Christian" sketch are not descriptions of virgin births, but rather, as Cheyne himself says, stories of "goddess-mothers" who were independent of the marriage tie, in other words, high-class harlots.

The theories that have been invented to explain the rise of the Biblical story of Jesus' birth contradict each other. We have a case of internecine warfare here. One is reminded of the witnesses who took the stand against Jesus at His trial before Caiaphas and whose witness agreed not together. The rival theories are hopelessly at variance with each other. The Jewish theory cuts the throat of the Gentile theory. The heathen theory disposes of the Jewish theory. The Babylonian theory gives the death-blow to the Jewish and the pagan theories and goes down to destruction with them.

Our prayer is that God, in His mercy, may preserve us in the true faith in His holy Word, that we may never waver in sincerely confessing: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Amen.

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

Dr. C. M. Jacobs and the Scriptures.—On April 22 Dr. C. M. Jacobs was inducted into office as president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, known as Mount Airy Seminary. On this occasion Dr. Jacobs delivered a notable address, which has been given wide publicity. With many of the sentiments which he

expressed we find ourselves in hearty agreement. How can we, for instance, withhold assent and approval when the following paragraph comes before us:—

“The Word of God, then, is the center of the Church. It is the Church’s dearest possession. When it is lost, the Church’s life is gone. This was the conviction about the Church on which our spiritual fathers of four centuries ago staked all that they had in this life, and all that they hoped to have hereafter. At the heart of historic Lutheranism are two convictions that are fundamental to it. They are, first: To be a Christian means to have that faith which is an active, living trust in God, through Jesus Christ, His Son; and secondly: This faith, which makes men Christians, is produced by God Himself, who comes to heart and conscience through His Word. It is but the corollary of these statements when we declare that the supreme purpose for which the Church exists is to bring this Word to man.”

But the position which Dr. Jacobs takes with respect to the Scriptures is one that must fill every true Lutheran with alarm and sorrow. Speaking of the Scriptures, he says:—

“But with all the emphasis which we lay upon the Scriptures we do not identify them with the Word of God. We confess that the Word of God is a means of grace; none of us will say that the Bible is a means of grace, save as it preserves in human language, and passes down from generation to generation, the record of God’s Word. Because it is the record of God’s Word, we owe to it our spiritual life; from it we derive our primary and normative knowledge of spiritual faith; in it our faith discovers the revelation of God Himself. Out of the Bible we learn to see the long historic process by which that revelation came. We learn to know it as a growing revelation, a light that had its dawn as well as its noon, a light that shone first upon the mountain-tops and fought the shadows down the hill-sides into the valleys. The Scriptures show us not only the perfect truth as it is in Christ, but half-truth as it lived in the minds of men; they have their zones of twilight as well as their brilliant sunlight. It was Luther who taught us to find in the Scriptures themselves their own standard of criticism and principle of interpretation,— *Ob sie Christum treiben*, ‘Do they deal with Christ?’ God’s revelation recorded in the Scriptures, His Word about Himself and ourselves that is written there, came ‘in divers parts and divers manners unto the fathers,’ before it came at last in His own Son, ‘the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person.’ That which we seek in Holy Scripture is this revelation, this God-given insight into the nature of God and of man; this Word of God that enters the depths of our hearts, convicting of sin and of righteousness and of judgment and calling us to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. We do not go to the Scriptures primarily for information about the world that is the material environment of life, or primarily for codes of law with which to regulate human conduct, our own and other men’s, but for that self-knowledge which is not complete until we have seen ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ This

is what we mean when we say that the Word of God is a means of grace and the Scriptures are the record of God's Word. For this view of the Word of God and this view of the Scriptures the Philadelphia Seminary has stood, and for them it will continue, by God's help, to stand."

Here the new president of Mount Airy Seminary definitely rejects the old Lutheran principle that the Bible not merely contains the Word of God, but *is* the Word of God. His remarks seem to imply the repudiation of the verbal inspiration and of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Dr. Jacobs here throws down the gauntlet, as it were, to all Lutherans who still hold the old belief, that the Bible is the Word of God. He places himself on the same platform as a writer in the *Lutheran Church Review* (U. L. C.) who in October, 1924, writing on the Sacraments as means of grace, said: "It seems almost impossible in the minds of most persons, both lay and clerical, to dissociate the Word of God from the Scriptures. For Luther there is a clear distinction, and his position is historically correct. . . . The Word of God for Luther meant something distinct from the Scriptures, its record," to which our only comment at this time is, *Quod est [non erat] demonstrandum*. — That the columns of the *Lutheran* (U. L. C.) are open to writers who express similar views can be seen from a book review which appeared in the issue of May 26, 1927. The writer, discussing a book condemning Modernism, has this to say about the author: "His own viewpoint is, however, so wooden and rigid and narrow that much that is written appears prejudiced, exaggerated, even false. The author believes 'Christianity is Bible religion,' and to him every sentence is absolutely true in every detail." This conviction the reviewer belittles. It seems that he does not believe that Christianity is Bible religion and that every sentence (in the Bible) is absolutely true in every detail. It appears, then, that certain influential spokesmen of the U. L. C. have left the old Lutheran moorings and are swiftly drifting into the channel of modern theology.

Two Prominent Lutherans Deceased. — Leipzig University mourns the death of a brilliant scholar, Dr. H. Boehmer, world-renowned for his researches relating to Luther. He died on March 25 at the early age of fifty seven. — Dr. G. H. Gerberding, professor at Northwestern Lutheran Seminary, Minneapolis, met his death in an accident on March 27. He had reached the ripe age of fourscore years.

A Victory for Religious Instruction. — "By ruling against the Freethinkers' Society, the highest court in the State of New York has ended the fight against classes in religion for public school children," writes *America* (May 21). It explains the attack of the Freethinkers as follows: "About 130 cities and towns in the State have adopted what is known as the New York Plan, which allows the local school boards to dismiss the children once or twice weekly, on the request of parents, for religious instruction by teachers approved by the boards and by the local pastors. More than a year ago the Freethinkers' Society of New York attacked the plan and was sustained by the court

of first instance, but lost on appeal. A complete analysis of this important case and of the decision can be found in *America* for May 8, 1926. Appeal to the highest court in the State was then taken by the society, and on May 10, ruling on the merits of the case, this court held that the plan was 'in harmony with the Constitution and the laws of the State.' This decision is wholly in keeping with the common-sense attitude adopted from the beginning by the State and local educational authorities. They realized that in certain districts parents wished to provide their children with a training which could not be obtained in the public schools. In the spirit of the decision of the Supreme Court in the Oregon case, a decision which has figured prominently in this litigation, they cooperated with the agencies which could give at least the elements of an education in religion and morality. The Appellate Division unanimously sustained them, remarking that, after all, the right of parents to control the education of their children is a natural right, protected by the Federal Constitution. New York's final court of appeal now sustains this righteous and plainly constitutional decision."

Two matters of utmost importance are defended in the decision of the New York Supreme Court: first, that regular and supervised instruction of children in religion is acknowledged as a vital part of their training; secondly, that the Federal Constitution protects the right of parents to control the education of their children. Both of these fundamental principles have been attacked and in the future will continue to be attacked by certain educational agencies. The precedents established by the decision of prominent courts of our country must not be forgotten by us who champion the Christian day-school.

MUELLER.

Farce. — "The University of Iowa has just organized a school of religion in which earnest men will strive to teach religion as a dynamic force in life, rather than as a matter of creed, tenets, rites, thaumaturgy, or priestcraft," writes *Time* (May 23). "At this aim, endorsed by the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, the *Presbyterian*, 'an official organ of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,' last week scoffed: —

"[The school] includes in its plan the religions of the Protestant Christians, the Roman Catholics, and the Jews. That these three parties should live in harmony and cooperate in civil and secular relations is reasonable and time-tested. But these religions and beliefs are in deadly antagonism. The Protestant Christians through their history have believed and testified that Christ is very God and very man. The Jews crucified Christ and have persistently declared that He was only a man, and even a man worthy of death. He has no special value either as a man or as a Savior. The Protestant declares that Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, that He is our only High Priest and holy Intercessor, and that through Him alone we have access to the Father. The Roman Catholics, while they acknowledge His deity, declare that man must at least in part pay the penalty of his own sin and that the hierarchy

fills the place of intercession between the believer and a just and holy God. The attempt to unite these three religions in any way is a farce."

Time is wrong when it asserts that the *Presbyterian* merely scoffs at the Iowa University scheme of teaching religion. In a very clear and objective way the *Presbyterian* states the facts of the case; nor is the word "farce" applied to this sort of teaching religion too strong, since it is, in the last analysis, a mockery and suppression of the true religion of Christ. The scheme, of course, is not new; long ago our liberal seminaries and university divinity schools have introduced into their curriculum this very abomination. MUELLER.

Ground for Divorce.—In the same issue of *Time* which we quoted above, we find the following report of a recommendation submitted to the Presbyterian General Assembly for the purpose of suppressing or at least checking the divorce evil: "Because alone of the principal Confessional Protestant communions the Presbyterian recognizes desertion as well as adultery as proper grounds for divorce, a committee headed by Dr. Clarence Edward Macartney, of Pittsburgh, last week recommended that the Presbyterian General Assembly declares: '... Yet is adultery alone clearly recognized in the New Testament as cause for divorce. Therefore the Church cannot sanction divorce on any other ground nor the remarriage of divorced persons other than the innocent parties in divorces granted for adultery; and it shall be unlawful for a minister to marry any divorced person except one so divorced.'

"The committee also proposed to delete entirely the old article of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith: 'Adultery or fornication committed after a contract [for marriage], being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract.'"

Of course, it is not true that "alone of the principal Confessional Protestant communions the Presbyterian recognizes desertion as well as adultery as proper grounds for divorce." It is the common opinion of Christian denominations that adultery is the only cause for divorce named in the New Testament; but every Christian denomination adhering to the Word of God admits also that in cases of malicious desertion "the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases." 1 Cor. 7, 15. The suggestion of the committee that "the Church cannot sanction divorce on any other ground nor the remarriage of divorced persons other than the innocent parties in divorces granted for adultery" goes beyond the express allowance established by God's Word and is therefore reprehensible.

MUELLER.

Poor Diagnosticians — Poor Physicians.—The visible Church is grievously ill. The normal condition is that of unity. The Holy Christian Church is one, and there should be but one "denomination." Instead of that the body ecclesiastic is torn and disrupted, divided, here in America, into forty major denominations and, counting their various subdivisions and independent growths, into some 257 bodies. And they refuse to unite. The *Christian Union Quarterly* lately

asked twenty-three prominent churchmen to define the disease, in other words, to state what they regard as the chief barriers to unity. Diagnosing the case, they arrived at a variety of conclusions. The *Lutheran* summarizes their findings thus: "1) Unchristian denominationalism. 2) Unwillingness to sacrifice denominational identity. 3) Resistance to any modification of the denominational idea. 4) Sectarian preferences in polity, ritual, and theology. 5) Established custom and inherited prejudices. 6) Indifference or antagonism to collective effort. 7) Lack of theological liberality. 8) Lack of will to unity. 9) Lack of intimate fellowship. 10) Lack of belief that further unity is possible. 11) Differences of intellectual attitudes. 12) Natural conservatism in favor of inherited forms of Christianity. 13) Holding fast to crass Biblical literalism. 14) Unwillingness to go through intellectual, moral, and spiritual struggle. 15) Racial, national, and denominational self-satisfaction. 16) Creeds and confessions. 17) Order of the ministry." Not one of them has diagnosed the case correctly. And yet Scripture has so plainly described the cause of the trouble. Teaching false doctrines has caused the divisions, and adhering to the error is perpetuating them. The Spirit states so expressly. We have 257 sects because "some are giving heed to seducing spirits," because "they are speaking lies in hypocrisy." No. 7 must pronounce his formula: "Lack of theological liberality," not against us, but against the writer of 1 Tim. 4, 1. 2. The divisions in the Church are caused and maintained by those who teach "contrary to the *doctrine* which ye have learned," Rom. 16, 17; "who come unto you and bring not this *doctrine*," 2 John 10; who "*teach* otherwise and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the *doctrine* which is according to godliness," 1 Tim. 6, 3. If No. 13 is describing the adherence to the words of Jesus Christ and His apostles as "holding fast to crass Biblical literalism," he will readily admit that he has not studied in the school of the Holy Spirit. Did 2 Thess. 2, 10. 11 never occur to these men? Do they not know that if men receive not the love of truth, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie? They are poor diagnosticians. There may be, there is, something to what, for instance, Nos. 8 and 9 say. But the real disease has escaped their notice. Nos. 1 to 5, 15 and 17 describe a true state of affairs, but they are dealing only with symptoms, not the disease itself. And it may be that the one or the other, when speaking of "denominationalism," has that condition in mind which No. 7 pronounces to be "lack of theological liberality," No. 13, "holding fast to crass Biblical literalism," and No. 16, the disease which breaks out in "creeds and confessions" — mistaking a clear case of virile health for a diseased condition. They are poor diagnosticians — and therefore poor physicians, unable to prescribe the cure, in other words, to remove the barriers. Various remedies are proposed. "1) Going Christ's way and going that way with Christ Himself. 2) Deepening and strengthening the Christian life. 3) More Christian esteem and confidence. 4) Association in common work. 5) Recognition of various forms of ordination. 6) Intercommunion and joint services. 7) Interchange

of preachers. 8) Coming together of Christians in world organizations. 9) Universal federation of Protestant churches. 10) Universal federation of Episcopal churches and Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant Episcopal. 11) Working of the Spirit of Truth. 12) Preaching and praying for the ideal. 13) Stressing the universality note in each denomination. 14) Stressing the Catholic character of Christian fellowship. 15) Return to the New Testament term of profession of faith in Christ. 16) Willingness that one's communion shall be lost in the kingdom." Again, not one of them is applying the apostolic cure. The Church will be restored to health in that day when all the erring denominations return to the pure doctrine, and by those who "in meekness *instruct* those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them *repentance* to the acknowledging of the *truth*." 2 Tim. 2, 25. Not even Nos. 11 and the like will do, at least not as the formulas read. The chief ingredient is lacking: "Working of the Spirit of Truth" *through the Word of Truth*. Nos. 6, 7, and the like are applying the Christian Science cure: ignore the differences, deny the disease, and the patient will recover. Exactly what the apostle warns against! "Mark them — avoid them — receive them not — from such withdraw thyself!" And these are the apostolic directions how to treat the disease: "These things command and teach." "Holding fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." 1 Tim. 4, 11; Tit. 1, 9. The Churches can regain the unity in the truth only by holding out for the truth. Ignoring the truth and refusing to discuss the doctrinal differences, even such a world-wide application of Remedy No. 4 as the "Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work" (Stockholm) is attempting will not effect a cure; it will only aggravate the case. — We agree with the *Lutheran*: "Before churches and sects can be united, they must find a common authority and bow before it. . . . No real unity is possible on the basis of Christian love. Get men together on a common basis of faith, and Christian love will have something to feed upon." Continuing, the *Lutheran* writes: "The only prospect for real unity as we see it is a serious and prolonged study, not of the creeds, but of the Scriptures, which most denominations profess to be the only authority of faith and life, to ascertain what *they* have to say concerning the great essentials of the Christian religion. . . . Scholars have cooperated successfully in producing a revised translation of the Scriptures; why should it be impossible for representatives from the various bodies to cooperate in seeking to extract from the Scriptures a definite body of belief to which either all, or particularly those bodies more nearly related to each other, could subscribe?" Such a body of doctrine is already in existence. All Christians can subscribe to it. It needs no revision in a single particular. Of course, it will come under the ban of No. 16 of the first set. So we shall not name it now. But if ever any body of Christian scholars should meet and produce a statement of belief to which all Christians can subscribe, it will prove to be the exact counterpart of the *Book of Concord*. And this new Book

of Unity will not confine itself to "the great essentials of the Christian religion." It is going to agree with the old *Book of Concord* and declare: "From this our explanation . . . every one may clearly infer that we have no intention of yielding *ought* of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity. . . . But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, *nothing* of the divine truth is surrendered, no room is given *the least error*." etc. Naturally, the discussions aiming at a Book of Unity will not at the start deal with the minor errors. They will take up, first of all, "the great essentials of the Christian religion" and here, first of all, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The Lutherans will demand that. It is to them the chief doctrine. All Christians will demand it. It is to them the chief doctrine. So that will be carried unanimously. If honest agreement is reached on this point, the cure will be effected. Says Luther: "If this single article remain pure, the whole Church will also remain pure, harmonious, and *without factions*." (5, 1170.) Why not, after all, make the old Book of Unity the basis of discussion? That was proposed long ago by Dr. Seiss: "She [our Church] has successfully laid a doctrinal, liturgical, and governmental basis, which leaves no possible excuse for sectarianism." (*Ecclesia Lutherana*, p. 189.) E.

If the Romanists Are Not Semi-Pelagians, What Are They?—

The Triumph of the Church. "Compiled by Rev. John P. Markoe, S. J.," St. Louis, Mo., gives a list and description of "False Religious Denominations," from the first to the nineteenth century. We read: "Lutherans: The name of an heretical sect founded by Martin Luther. . . . Luther denied tradition; the divine authority of the Papacy; that councils were infallible; that original justice was a supernatural gift; that human nature remained essentially the same in its powers after the fall of Adam; that man, after the Fall, can produce any good works; held that man sins in whatever he does; that the sins of the just are covered by faith and not done away with; maintained that all works of sinners are sins; denied free will; all the Sacraments except Baptism and the Eucharist; transubstantiation; the sacrifice of the Mass; purgatory and the utility of praying to the saints," etc. In the main, Father Markoe has given his people a pretty fair idea of what Luther taught and what their Church teaches. Luther "denied free will," and the Romanists assert free will. So far, good. Then they would be Semi-Pelagians. The Semi-Pelagians rejected the doctrine of Pelagius, of the moral soundness of man; they rejected also the doctrine of Augustine, of the entire corruption and bondage of the natural man. They taught that his natural powers were diseased, crippled, but sufficient to assist towards his salvation, conversion and sanctification being the joint product of grace and the human will. But our pamphlet has this: "Semi-Pelagians: a sect traced to John Cassianus. . . . The errors of the Semi-Pelagians were condemned in the year 432 by Pope Celestine I; in 529 by Pope Felix IV, in the

Synod of Orange and the Synod of Valence, both of which councils were confirmed by Pope Boniface II. These errors were: The beginning of faith depends on man's free will, while faith itself and its increase depend absolutely upon God; nature has a certain claim to grace; final perseverance is not a special gift of grace, but depends upon man's own strength; some children die before baptism, and others after, on account of the foreknowledge God possesses of the good or evil they would have done if they had lived; some are predestined to heaven, others to hell." We shall not discuss the errors here listed, but only make the general statement that Catholics repudiate the name and title of Semi-Pelagians. Then what are they? They are not Lutherans; for Luther denied free will. And Semi-Pelagians they cannot afford to style themselves; for Semi-Pelagianism stands condemned by councils and Popes, and "councils are infallible." The author of the treatise could not afford to set down the points in the Semi-Pelagian system which have been taken over bodily by Rome. We shall do so in order to give the Catholic Church a fixed status in the religious world, or rather let Rome fix its own status. *Canons and Decrees of Trent*, Sess. VI, chap. I: ". . . although free will, attenuated as it was in its powers and bent down, was by no means extinguished in them." Canon IV: "If any one saith that man's free will, moved and excited by God, by assenting to God, exciting and calling, no wise cooperates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of justification, . . . let him be anathema." Canon V: "If any one saith that since Adam's sin the free will of man is lost and extinguished, . . . let him be anathema." There is no help for it; Semi-Pelagianism, "condemned in the Synod of Orange and the Synod of Valence, both of which councils were confirmed by Pope Boniface II," is the faith of Rome. And Father Markoe has no heartfelt horror of the founder of this faith: "John Cassianus, . . . a celebrated and holy man, who, although never formally canonized, was venerated as a saint, and whose name appears as such on the Greek Calendar,"—and he the founder of a "false religious denomination"! And it's true! The biography of Luther as given in our manual is worth reprinting here: "Martin Luther, who was born at Eisleben, Germany, November 10, 1483; attended a Catholic Latin school at Mansfeld, and in 1497, when fourteen years old, entered another Catholic school at Magdeburg. He matriculated at the Catholic University of Erfurt in Thuringia, in 1501, where he became a Master of Philosophy at the age of twenty. On Juli 17, 1505, he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt and in 1507 was ordained a Catholic priest. In 1508 he was made professor of philosophy at the new Catholic University of Wittenberg, visited Rome in 1510 or 1511 on business of his order, and some time after his return began to lecture on the Scriptures. On October 31, 1517, he nailed his 95 theses against indulgences to the door of the church in Wittenberg. On September 21, 1520, he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X. Later he married an ex-nun, Catherine von Bora, and finally died in 1546." The story ends somewhat abruptly, but there's no denying it—he finally died.

E.

"The Candidate of the Holy See." — The Marshall-Smith controversy has led to the following statement, published May 10, by the Apostolic Delegate to the United States in the press of the country: "Lest there be any doubt in the public mind about the Holy See's absolute indifference concerning the candidacy of Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York, or that of any other person, in the approaching presidential elections, Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State, has considered it proper, even though superfluous, to emphasize the Vatican's position of aloofness from the politics of the United States. In a communication received by Archbishop Fumasoni-Biondi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, the Cardinal-Secretary of State notes that some newspapers have been referring to Governor Smith as 'the candidate of the Holy See,' while others declare that his candidacy is deplored by the Holy See. His Eminence deemed it superfluous to assert that the Holy See is not interested or concerned in any way in the coming presidential campaign, and this by reason of its principle of remaining absolutely aloof from the internal contests in the political circles of every country." To this *America* remarks: "To the straightforward declaration of Cardinal Gasparri, transmitted by the Apostolic Delegate, nothing need be added. It is the platform on which *America* has stood and will continue to stand." — The great service which Lawyer Marshall has rendered the American people by publicly challenging Governor Smith to come out with a clean-cut statement of his position if he were elected President, is reflected in Cardinal Gasparri's communication. As a matter of fact the Holy See is deeply interested in "the internal contests in the political circles of every country," and of this many of our countrymen are no longer ignorant. Archbishop Fumasoni-Biondi's declaration was prompted by more than a passing spirit of unrest caused by Governor Smith's unsatisfactory reply. Rome saw the rising of a tide of opposition which it was not ready to meet at this time, and therefore it poured on the tempestuous waves the oil of a conciliating falsehood.

MUELLER.

"A Fellowship of Uncongenial Minds." — The Episcopalians have brought the art of walking together, though they be not agreed (Amos 3, 3), to a high degree of perfection. In *The Church and the Truth*, a volume telling the story of the Church Congress of the Episcopalian Church which met at Richmond, Va., in 1926, they exhibit themselves as faithfully "endeavoring to keep the discord of the spirits in the bond of peace." The review of the book given in the *Lutheran* says: "At the conclusion of the congress Dr. Beverly D. Tucker, Jr., chairman of the local committee, quite aptly characterized the congress as 'a fellowship of uncongenial minds.' . . . Dr. Bowie pleads for a spineless evangelical theology and assumes that evangelical faith will remain when its doctrinal foundation in the atonement is given up; Dr. Tucker pleads for the simplicity of the Gospel over against emphasis on orders, ritual, and government; while Dr. MacComb maintains that evangelical theology must emphasize a present and living Christ, the need of conversion, and the reality of the future life. Dr. Williams maintains that loyalty to the

Church is loyalty to the right, and that a loyal churchman is at once high, low, and broad. Dr. Nelson declares that loyalty to the Church is consistent with differences of faith and practise, even with differences on the truth of the Virgin Birth and of the Resurrection. Mr. Langley maintains that the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are essential. Dr. Hodgson's address on 'Psychology and Belief' is frankly evolutionary in its standpoint. Dr. Angus Dun's address on 'The New Psychology and Christian Belief' is a fine defense of religion against the assaults of the new psychology." The prophet could not see how two can walk together unless they be agreed. The Church Congress shows how three can walk together in different directions, — as Dr. Williams puts it, "a loyal churchman is at once high, low, and broad." E.

Reconciling Christianity and Evolution. — Under the general title "The Christian and the Theater" a former actor, now converted to Christ, is relating his experiences in the *Sunday-school Times*. In the second of the series the narrator, whose name is not given, points out strikingly the impossibility of reconciling Christianity and evolution. He writes: "I had, of course, accepted the evolutionary theory *in toto*; for it provided an excellent basis for the naturalistic philosophy which I had embraced. But I was no Modernist. It will generally be found that the person who attempts to reconcile the commonly accepted Christian view of the world with the evolutionist's succeeds at the cost of Christianity; the reconciliation is found to be no reconciliation at all. The process is so amusingly illustrated in an old limerick that I cannot resist quoting it: —

"There was a young lady of Niger
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside —
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

The *denouement* of this woeful rhyme is inevitable. The young lady chose the tiger for her mount; the tiger thereupon chose the young lady for his meal. One can scarcely blame the tiger for behaving like a tiger, and it strikes me that the lady, who should have known better, really deserved what she got. But, however one may feel toward the two parties in this unnatural alliance, one cannot by any stretch of imagination call the outcome of their ride a reconciliation. So when the Modernist triumphantly proclaims he has reconciled Christianity with that uncertain commodity which he calls 'the assured results of scientific thought,' it will be found that the reconciliation has been effected in much the same way as the lady in the limerick was reconciled to the tiger. All that was distinctively Christian has been sacrificed to a rigid uniformitarianism that will not, if it can help, admit the supernatural. 'The smile on the face of the tiger' would hardly be considered adequate compensation for the loss of the lady by any friends she may have had. They would not think the tiger less tigerish or more ladylike because of the smile. Neither are intelligent Christians deceived by the bland smiles of Modernists into imagining that its skepticism becomes a whit more Christian by becoming affable."

MUELLER.

The Facts of Science and the Truths of the Bible.—Have the modern discoveries of science rendered the teachings of the Christian religion uncertain? Dr. W. H. P. Faunce, president of Brown University (affiliated with the Baptist Church), is convinced of it. He gives this as the cause of the appalling increase in the cases of suicide committed by students: "The modern mind is overwhelmed with a multitude of new facts with no clue to their meaning. We have millions of new facts, but no sense of values, no clear perception of duty, no theory to live or die by." Before discussing these "millions of new facts" and their bearing upon the teachings of religion, an additional fact should be impressed upon the mind of the Modernist, a fact which he usually ignores. And that is the historical fact that long before the days of "millions of new facts" men have been insisting that the discoveries of science leave room for nothing but agnosticism or unbelief. It cannot be the multitude of new facts that accounts for the modern view of life, because men of ancient days with considerably less facts to deal with, have taken the same view of life and, what is still more remarkable, have been indulging in the same kind of phraseology, pleading the great advance science had made in their days. The modern mind must look for the cause of its infidelity elsewhere. Forty-five years ago Robert G. Ingersoll (who described himself, not as a Modernist, but as a plain infidel) declared: "In this age of fact and demonstration it is refreshing to find a man" (referring to an advocate of the Bible) "who believes so thoroughly in the monstrous and miraculous, the impossible and immoral." Ingersoll knew—to employ the loose manner of speaking used by Dr. Faunce—only one million facts, but this comparatively small number was to him sufficient proof that the Bible teachings are monstrous and impossible. And he had the same hopeless view of life and death as the Modernist. At his brother's grave he brought this message to his despairing fellows: "While yet in love with life and raptured with the world, he passed to silence and pathetic dust. . . . Whether in mid-sea or 'mong the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck at last must mark the end of each and all. . . . Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. . . . He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his last breath, 'I am better now.' Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead." How many facts were known to Pliny the Elder, the naturalist of ancient Rome? Let us say one thousand. We are sure the Modernists will gladly accept this low figure. But he, too, was overwhelmed by them and became a "heathen" infidel. Says Uhlhorn: "Deeply as this fanaticism of unbelief moves us, we are equally, if not more, affected by the calmness with which Pliny sets forth as an assured result of science that there are no gods; for, he says, Nature alone is God, the mother of all things, the holy, immeasurable universe; and with freezing unconcern he draws the comfortless conclusion inseparable from this view of the world: 'There

is nothing certain, save that nothing is certain, and there is no more wretched and yet arrogant being than man. The best thing which has been given to man amid the many torments of this life is that he can take his own life.'” It is not the *multitude* of the new facts that lies at the bottom of unbelief.

Nor is it the *nature* of these facts. On this point Dr. L. S. Keyser takes issue with Dr. Faunce, and we think that Dr. Keyser is acquainted with as many “millions of new facts” as Dr. Faunce. Dr. Keyser writes in the *Lutheran* of April 14: “What new facts have come to light that have obscured the meaning of life from the modern mind? Do we not still have the Bible to tell us the meaning of things? Where are there any ‘new facts’ that are not included in the eternal plan and program set forth in God’s holy Book? Not one ‘fact’ that we can think of in the least invalidates the glorious truth that God created man in His own image and designed him for an immortal destiny of blessedness and glory. Has President Faunce, the president of a great Christian university, lost his Bible and the Christ of the Bible, who ‘brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel’? What are the ‘new facts’ that blot the sun out of the skies? . . . Honestly, to our mind all the new facts that have come to light have accentuated the true values of life and may be correlated with the Biblical scheme. The wonders of matter prove the great importance of matter, since we see that God has made it more wonderful than we ever suspected. The same may be said of the marvels of living things. When the biologist describes minutely the remarkable structure and doings of the cell, which is the unit of life, we place a higher value than ever upon life. . . . Dr. Faunce complains that we have ‘no clear perception of duty.’ Now, we are glad to inform our disheartened Modernist that the Ten Commandments are still in the Bible and that they still constitute a divinely given norm of human conduct. . . . No ‘new facts’ that we can think of have abrogated the law of obligation commanded in the Book Divine. . . . Modernism means a *descensus*. Let a man once begin to question the divine authority of the Bible and get too high an idea of human reason and wisdom, and there is no telling where he will end.”

E.

Who has been Romancing? — The higher critics have been wont to treat the historical books of the Bible, particularly those of the Old Testament, most particularly the “Heptateuch,” as romances. Archeological research, however, is confirming the exactness of one historical statement of the Bible after the other. Compare, for instance, Deut. 1, 28; 9, 1; Josh. 14, 12; 15, 15 ff.; Judg. 1, 11 ff. with these remarks of the *American Review of Reviews*, April, 1927: “A recent issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra* has just reached our desk, and we have read with interest a detailed account of the excavations at Kirjath-sepher, conducted by the Xenia Theological Seminary in cooperation with the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem. . . . Kirjath-sepher is known in the Bible accounts as a ‘fenced city,’ and the spies’ frightened description of a ‘city walled up to heaven,’ in this case at least, seems justified.” (Let the higher critics get what com-

fort they may from the qualified form of this statement.) "The city is built on a high hill, the sides of which are, in places, almost perpendicular. To this was added a wall of at least forty feet and, on account of the slope of the *revêtement*, of almost fifty feet. A large part of this great wall remains, partly obscured by rubbish. . . . Such work as that at Kirjath-sepher not only confirms the findings of archeological science elsewhere in Palestine, but throws much light upon expressions of the Bible." Which, interpreted, means that the higher critics, "in this case at least, seem" to have been romancing.

E.

God and the Floods. — The *Christian Century*, in a recent issue, expressed its joy over the fact that, so far as it knew, no attempt has been made in Christian periodicals to charge God with being the cause of the devastating floods that have harassed large parts of our country. *Time* quotes it as saying: "It is gratifying to be able to state that, so far as we have observed, there have been no efforts to interpret the devastating floods in the Mississippi Valley as punishment inflicted by an outraged Deity upon the sinful dwellers in the lowlands. If the calamity had been a tornado, a fire, an earthquake, or a tidal wave, doubtless there would have been the usual outbursts of piously blasphemous explanations that the divine patience was exhausted and that the sufferers were getting what was coming to them for their intolerable iniquities. It was so with Galveston, San Francisco, and Florida. It is doubtful whether there has been any notable improvement in theological thinking since those earlier disasters, and the problems of theodicy are as baffling as ever. But this is a plain case of high water. One can almost see why it happened; at least one can see why it happened where it did. . . . One does not have to be a materialist to believe that the reason for the flood in the bottom-lands is not that God is angry with Arkansas and Louisiana, but that there is too much water in the river to run off through the normal channel."

In its superficial and blasphemous statement of the case the *Christian Century* entirely overlooks the very question which baffles all who view the situation, "Why is there too much water in the river?" The unceasing rains which are accountable for the disaster are certainly not "true generous gifts of nature," as a certain periodical has put it. If we admit a divine providence which orders and controls all things according to definite laws, we are naturally led to connect the chastening hand of God with this horrible disaster. The Bible informs us that God in His divine sovereignty is the cause of all things that happen in the world either by His dispensing or His permissive providence. "I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." Is. 45, 7. Again: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos 3, 6. However, the awful calamity is a solemn warning to the whole country, and we are not to regard God as being particularly angry with the inhabitants of Arkansas and Louisiana. Luke 13, 1—5. Christ's admonition and warning reads: "I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

MUELLER.

Is the Crowd Mind a Safe Guide? — Discussing this subject, the *Lutheran* offers some remarks which are worth repeating:—

"Beware of the 'crowd mind.' If ever there was a fallacy proclaimed, it was by the author of the Latin proverb, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.' History teaches the exact contrary. The belief in majority rule, which has taken such a strong hold on the popular mind in America, is cut out of the cloth of the Latin proverb. The grain of truth that lies at the bottom of the proverb escapes the average mind. It is that the universal religious consciousness in the hearts of men is often a safer guide than the highly specialized wisdom of those who sit in the seats of the learned. Glenn Frank speaks of the psychologist's fear that we are rapidly becoming a crowd-civilization, in which mass thinking is thrusting out of influence and power the disciplined thinking of the individual. It is what the majority says that determines what is believed to be right or wrong. We are beginning to be aware of the dangers of this 'crowd mind.' It was quite conspicuous during the late war. 'He kept us out of war' elected a president; but it soon ended and gave place to another slogan, 'Make the world safe for democracy.' Now that the catastrophe has crushed the war spirit, those who once shouted for war, even from the pulpit, are now calling it a crime and saying, 'Make the world safe against another cataclysm like that.' Human nature has not changed from what it was when the multitude shouted 'Hosanna' in one breath and but a few brief hours afterward changed it into 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' Fickle as the wind is the 'crowd mind.'"

The Sunday Evening Service. — Thus writes Dr. Sheldon in the *Christian Herald*: "Nearly all the ministers of all the denominations have what is known as a 'Sunday evening problem.' It consists in creating a service that will attract an audience and be at the same time appropriate for Sunday evening in a church. Many different plans have been tried by many different ministers. Just straight Gospel sermons with a regular church worship service; a musical service, centering most of it around cantatas and orchestra; an open forum for the discussion of current and historical subjects; motion-pictures; evangelistic services enlisting special talent; meetings in which the Church Brotherhood has charge; and many other methods with occasional pronounced success as far as audiences are concerned, but nearly all of them created with tremendous effort on the part of the pastor or the church committee and a constant search for 'programs' that will draw a crowd.

"'But why try to have a second Sunday service?' say an increasing number of the younger ministers all over the country. And the question is not put by men who want to escape the work of another service. Let one of these young ministers speak of the vesper service as the most satisfactory solution of his Sunday evening 'problem':—

"'I struggled for five years to keep up a Sunday evening service, and the best I could do was to get into the service the same people who had already attended a morning preaching service, many of whom

had taught a class in the Sunday-school and had done other mission-work during the day. I have a large church auditorium, and in the morning it is nearly always filled. But in the evening the galleries were empty, and if I had two hundred people, I felt as if it were all I could expect.

"By the consent and cooperation of my church board I have been having for the last two years a vesper service at five o'clock Sunday afternoon and no other evening service except the young people's meeting at six-thirty. This vesper consists of music by my choir, made up of consecrated church-members; we have devotional readings; there is silent prayer; I speak on some theme that touches life; often I read passages from the Bible with comments. The whole service lasts an hour. The audiences number more than I ever had for an evening meeting. The people are home in time to spend the time there without feeling guilty not to be at the second service. I find by inquiry that my church-members for the most part are delighted with this vesper plan. Other parishes may not be like mine, but I shall never go back to the old struggle to keep up another preaching service Sunday night.'

"From large correspondence with ministers and from personal acquaintance I am being convinced that for a large number of parishes situated as is the one described by this young minister the vesper plan is a reasonable change from the night service. It is worth considering by anxious preachers who face the empty pew Sunday nights."

If we may express an opinion on Sunday evening services, it is this: Do not hold such services unless you have time to offer a well-prepared sermon. One good sermon a Sunday is better than two poor ones; not quantity, but quality, counts here.

BOOK REVIEW.

Certificate Booklets for Baptisms, Confirmations, and Weddings.

Two different sizes. German or English. Small size, 20 cts.; large size, 30 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

The former custom of framing large certificates and then hanging them on the wall has been almost entirely abandoned. Certificate booklets can be better put away, or even exhibited, as a memento of the particular day or event. The make-up of these booklets is very artistic, attractive, and serviceable.

FRITZ.

The Book of Job. Its Significance to Ministers and Church-Members.

By *L. Fuerbringer, D. D.* Done into English by *E. H. Paar*. 77 pages, 5¼×7½. 85 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

This book of seventy-seven pages was originally a German synodical paper, read at the convention of the California and Nevada District of the Missouri Synod, in the year 1921, by Dr. F. Fuerbringer. Students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who have enjoyed the privilege of hearing

exegetical lectures by Dr. Fuerbringer know that because of his exact knowledge of the original languages and his painstaking study of the Scriptures he is an exegete filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We are glad that the lay reader, especially the English reader, is given an opportunity to get some benefit of the gifts with which God has endowed the venerable Doctor. Especially are we pleased that a popular treatment of the Book of Job is made available for our people; for we believe that the Book of Job is one of the most neglected and least understood books of the Bible. It is, however, not only a book of great literary merit, but is filled with valuable lessons for the Christian life, especially for the days of trouble and trial. — Since translating is not an easy task, we believe that the translator, Pastor E. H. Paar, of Harrisburg, Pa., deserves at least favorable mention. FRITZ.

Foreign Missions in China. Five lectures by *Frederick Brand*. 31 pages, 6×9. 20 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

These five lectures were originally delivered over KFUO, then printed in the *Homiletic Magazine*, and at the insistent request of many hearers are now offered in pamphlet form. On account of the present political upheaval in China the attention of the entire world is directed that way. It is likely that if the five lectures delivered by the Rev. F. Brand, the director of our foreign mission work, are offered to our people, they will gladly buy and read them. The subjects of the addresses are the following: "My Trip to China," "The Need of Foreign Missions, or the Missionary Motive," "Survey of Christian Missionary Activity in China from Apostolic Times," "The Effect of Protestant Missions in China," "The Present Political Unrest in China and the Foreign Missions." FRITZ.

The Larger Stewardship. By *Charles A. Cook*. 118 pages, 5×7½. Paper, 25 cts. (The Judson Press, Philadelphia, Pa.) Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

The money problem in the Church will best be solved when the larger question of stewardship is well understood in the light of the Gospel. We agree with Dr. Cook, the author of *The Larger Stewardship*, that "we must get back of the money question to the man himself, back of the collection to the character, back of what a man gives to what he is"; we would add: and back to a right understanding of the true relation of the Christian to all his material blessings, as this relation is taught in the Bible. Christians are not always conscious of their heavenly citizenship and of the demands which this makes upon their natural endowments, their time, their service, and their money; in short, Christians must better learn to consecrate themselves, and all they have, wholly to the Lord, who died for them and rose again. Since it does not yet appear what we shall be, we are too often too much engrossed with the things of this life. Says Dr. Cook: "There are vast resources of wealth in the possession of Christian men and women which have not yet been brought under the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and that are not being administered along stewardship lines for Christ and the evangelization of the world. A more thorough and more general campaign to inculcate stewardship of this type needs to be vigorously prosecuted in all the

churches. But important as this phase of stewardship is and great as is the necessity for an earnest continuation of propaganda on its behalf among the churches, there is a stewardship that is greater and much more important. This larger stewardship has to do with the life, the inner life, of the believer and with all the outer expression of that life. No man can be fully the kind of steward God wants him to be in relation to wealth until he learns the deeper lessons in the essentials of true stewardship living and service. . . . Greater power in the Church and larger service for Christ by the Church, because of the richer faith and fuller consecration of individual Christians, must come through an apprehension and application of this larger stewardship. Stewardship of money is only a fraction of our full Christian stewardship." The more comprehensive study of stewardship is treated by Dr. Cook in his book *The Larger Stewardship*. He has written paragraphs on the following topics: The Larger Stewardship; The Stewardship of Personality; The Stewardship of Talents; The Stewardship of a Calling; The Stewardship of Influence; The Stewardship of Opportunity; The Stewardship of Time; The Stewardship of Substance. Pastors will do well to purchase the book and pass on its information to their members. It must, however, be understood that the only proper motive power for all stewardship is the love of Christ. A concluding chapter stressing this fact would, we believe, have greatly enhanced the value of Dr. Cook's book. FRITZ.

Systematic Theology. By Wilhelm Herrmann. Translated by Nathaniel Micklem and Kenneth A. Saunders. \$1.50. (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1927.)

The translators say: "For a generation Dr. Wilhelm Herrmann was one of the most influential and respected of the religious teachers of Britain as well as of Germany. He was the most outstanding figure of the Ritschlian school, which has profoundly affected British thinking. Marburg became before the war something like a place of pilgrimage for younger theologians from the British universities." These young theologians would, of course, bring up the great question whether the Bible or experience is the basis of faith. They were taught this: "Such an assurance [of the forgiveness of sins] cannot come to us through any doctrine which we are prepared to accept, but only through a fact which is rooted in our own life as a working of God that we have ourselves experienced" (p. 120). They would inquire further: Is, then, the Scripture of any value to us? Surely; "every man we meet who experiences inward emancipation through God is God's word to us. But this significance attaches in a preeminent degree to the expression of faith which we find in unequaled measure in Holy Scripture" (p. 150). Were the Scriptures inspired? I prefer to call it "the tradition about Jesus" (p. 47). Then the Scriptures were not inspired? "This doctrine of 'inspiration' has now become so untenable in evangelical Christianity that it no longer finds any theological support" (p. 61). How can we know which portion of this tradition about Jesus is authoritative? "First, we must be in a position to search out in the Scriptures those ideas which impress us as belonging to faith; secondly, obedience to Scripture should be required of no man as regards those passages in which he personally does not hear

God speak to him. . . . The birth of faith within ourselves is the sole means whereby we may distinguish between such passages of Scripture and those others in which we can apprehend God for ourselves" (p. 72). These uninspired Scriptures are not reliable throughout? "Historical criticism may, and even must, question the certitude of this tradition" (p. 77). But, Doctor, to ascribe erroneous teachings to the Bible will imperil men's salvation! On the contrary, "the doctrine of a double predestination, which, following Rom. 9—11 Luther [!!] and Calvin developed even more crudely than Augustine, has no basis in faith. . . . But the fact that the Bible contains such a development of thought as we find preeminently in Rom. 9, 20—23 should subserve our salvation if it brings us to face the question whether we are prepared to follow Scripture even in that which we cannot understand to be a notion rooted in our faith. If we decide to do this, we are treating the Bible as a law-book, which requires from us external obedience" (p. 134).

What does experience and what do those portions of Scripture which are true teach concerning redemption? "In the orthodox doctrine of the *munus Christi triplex* the largest place is occupied by the doctrine of redemption. . . . According to this doctrine, God is reconciled by the sacrifice offered to Him. The satisfaction offered by Christ to the righteous God in place of the sinner (*satisfactio vicaria*) should therefore be the basis of our confidence in God's forgiveness. . . . Such a conception, however, is entirely un-Biblical" (p. 118ff.). How, then, did Christ, according to the non-orthodox, the liberal, the Biblical (?) view, redeem us? "For Jesus it must have been inconceivable that His work was necessary to effect a change in God's attitude to sinners. . . . This unlimited, indestructible goodness of God toward every one in whom there is still any trace of longing for Him Jesus depicts both in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and also when He bases the command to love one's enemies upon God's own attitude towards His enemies (Matt. 5, 45)" (p. 121). "That Jesus Christ has the power to redeem us can only mean that our present experience of the reality of His person convinces us as nothing else does that God will accept us" (p. 115). Then, since Christ's work did not consist in His expiating for our sins, but in bringing us the assurance that God is Love, demanding no satisfaction, what does Scripture and the Church mean by the term "forgiveness of sins"? "To accept God's forgiveness means that we become aware in a fact of our experience that the same God who judges us for our sins seeks us to unite us with Himself" (p. 118). "In the cross such men always see the complete manifestation of the fact of God's desire to say to them that their guilt, however grievous it be, shall not separate them from Him. This is the forgiveness of God which we experience" (p. 124). "He can be certain of his salvation only by keeping before his eyes the fact of God's grace directed towards him. This, however, happens in faith or in trust in Jesus Christ; for herein it becomes clear to the sinner that in spite of his sins God treats him as His child" (p. 130). Then, after all, faith saves? That is "the conception which we find in Jesus and in Paul, that the sinner is saved by faith" (p. 113). You do not mean by faith the acceptance of the Gospel promise of forgiveness? No; "faith is the attitude of entire surrender to the spiritual Power there revealed" (p. 60), "the assurance

that, since this man does not cast her away (Luke 7, 36—50), God Himself would accept her" (p. 118). What, in a word, does redemption and salvation by faith mean? "Redemption consists in the revival, in man, of the faith which his sins had destroyed. . . . The beginning of redemption lies in that transformation of our attitude to God which is brought about by the Redeemer" (p. 113). That is certainly not the teaching of Paul and Luther? It certainly is. "According to the doctrine of the Reformers justification is a judgment of God upon the sinner, whereby God says to him: 'Thou art fit for communion with Me.' That hits off correctly in general terms the Pauline notion of justification" (p. 131). In the last analysis, Doctor, what saves man? "Jesus tries continually to make clear what real righteousness is, and He tries to stimulate men to put their trust in the goodness of God. . . . We are only in reality submissive to the power of God when we stand to Him in a relationship of absolute trust and in inward independence practise the good we know; when, that is to say, our conduct is authentic obedience" (p. 45f.). This is "the fundamental thought of Jesus' Gospel, that it is in God's rule in our hearts that our salvation consists" (p. 115).

When the young pilgrims heard the master declare: "In general, it is the way of Jesus to take the language of Old Testament religion very seriously" (p. 46), and: "The notion that a creature such as the devil can bar the way of the seeker after God must ultimately be rendered impossible by the religious knowledge of God's omnipotence. . . . It is true that Jesus shared in the idea of a devil, as He did, in general, in the whole world-view then current in Israel," some of them may have inquired: Is Jesus Christ true God? "From the prophets, the servants of God, He distinguishes Himself as the 'Son of God' (Matt. 21, 34—39)" (p. 48). Does that mean that He is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, the Second Person of the Trinity? "The word" (person) "does not indicate three divine personalities"; "The doctrine of the Trinity must always start from the fact that God reveals to us His single nature in this threefold way (economical Trinity)" (p. 151f.). Then, since there is no eternal Son of the Father, why is Jesus called the "Son of God"? "Jesus becomes for us the evidence of the reality of the God whom He calls His Father; for every feature of the tradition in which we find His inner life expressed combines to depict a man who derives from his confidence in God the power to accomplish the greatest tasks and to bear the heaviest burdens" (p. 77). "We have no terms in which we can adequately express this relationship of Jesus to God. We can only represent it by the Biblical expression offered us in the New Testament, Son of God" (p. 139). What is meant by the divinity of Jesus? "The more God becomes to us a reality of experience, the more we realize God's rule in us, which alone can redeem us. But the effect Jesus has upon us is that in His working we are bound to see God Himself turning to us and ready to save us. Whoever has this experience in connection with the person of Christ will find growing within him this thought of Christ's divinity" (p. 138). In short, Jesus is not true God? "It will not do to seek to base Christian faith upon the hypothesis that in Christ divine nature is united with human nature. . . . Luther continued to employ the inadequate notion of a divine nature in Christ" (p. 141f.).

And the young pilgrims went forth from Marburg and preached Ritschlianism, Unitarianism, rationalism, heathenism, in all the world. — An Episcopalian divine of St. Louis preached the other day in Des Moines and was quoted thus: "We are to remember that Christ is not a reformer, but a liberator, to set free the full potentialities of human life, to ransom His people from the thralldom of their conception of an angry God, and win them to the God of mercy and love." This divine had been making pilgrimages, if not to Marburg, then at any rate to a colony of Marburg.

E.

The Message of Jesus. A Survey of the Teaching of Jesus Contained in the Synoptic Gospels. By *Harvie Branscomb*, Professor of New Testament, Duke University. \$1.00.

This book is to belong to the "Bible Text Series," of which Dr. E. B. Chappell is editor and the various volumes of which are to be used "by adult classes and study groups." To understand the present volume, one must bear in mind that it is designed to discuss the message of Jesus as far as this is contained in the synoptic gospels. What Jesus taught according to the fourth gospel is to be dwelt on in another volume. There is much that is good and helpful in this book, but to a number of statements we either have to take exception, or we have to regret that they are not without ambiguity. When the writer, on page 18, says that Mark first accompanied Paul and Silas (instead of Barnabas), that is, of course, merely a little slip. But we cannot condone this statement of his about Mark: "Occasionally he cannot resist the temptation to tell a good story, whether it be important for his purpose or not." Again, why does the writer say with respect to Matthew: "There are certain strong reasons for thinking that he was not the sole author of the completed gospel as it now stands, but that he wrote perhaps an earlier form of the gospel or else a document, such as a collection of Jesus' teachings, which has been incorporated into it"? An unbiased investigation will show that these "strong reasons" have very little solid ground to rest on. The statement on p. 37: "It is just as clear that Jesus did not read the Old Testament as all of equal worth," is ambiguous. If he means that not all parts of the Old Testament are of equal significance, he is right; but if he means to say that some parts are more inspired than others, we have to demur. Furthermore, is it true that Jesus "taught primarily a certain religious view of life"? Was not the main element of His teaching the good news of God's grace and of the redemption? The remark on p. 48: "In the actual concrete world Jesus saw God everywhere; he had imagination, or rather, I should say, eyes to see," hardly speaks of Jesus with the reverence which we owe Him. Can a Bible Christian accept the statement that for Jesus "the elaborate angelology of Judaism is purely conventional"? — But enough of such details. What I consider as the most serious fault of the book is that it does not dwell sufficiently on what Jesus taught concerning universal sinfulness and of His own redemptive work. It is true that as far as the latter is concerned, the last chapter of the book has a few sentences on it, but they utterly fail to do justice to what the synoptic gospels report as to the teaching of Jesus in this matter. I should not advise that this book be placed in the hands of our Sunday-school teachers.

Studies in the Psalter.

In 1923 Synod resolved that some of the outstanding theological productions in the German language shall be published in English also. Pursuant to that resolution the Literary Board has given this matter its attention, and the work is proceeding as rapidly as circumstances permit.

Scarcely any of these republications will be translations, nor is this the case with the new book which we herewith bring to your attention, *Studies in the Psalter*, by Prof. O. W. Wismar. Wismar's book derives its material principally from two excellent German essays, one by Dr. P. E. Kretzmann (Ps. 46), the other by Dr. W. H. T. Dau (Ps. 119), both of which were delivered before the synodical convention of the Northern Wisconsin District, in 1921 and in 1919, respectively.

Prefacing his text, the author says: "The fact that the New Testament contains 59 quotations from the psalms ought to suffice to arouse a special interest among all Christians in the Psalter. The further fact that of the 548 proof-texts in our Catechism 62 are taken from the psalms ought to make every Lutheran communicant desirous and eager to study the Psalter. Again, the large number of hymns based directly or indirectly upon the psalms ought to invite the lover of sacred songs to a more intimate and thorough acquaintance with the Old Testament song-book of Israel."

While the first chapter treats of the Book of Psalms in general, the succeeding ones take up Psalms 46 and 119 in particular. Both psalms are happily chosen right at this time, the subject of the former being "The Church, Her Comfort and Security," and that of the latter, the longest of them all, "Faithful Adherence to the Divinely Revealed Word."

As the original essays were intended for the clergy and the laity alike, so also this present volume will fulfil its mission more completely if placed in the hands of our lay people, and this can best be done with the help of our pastors, who may find it expedient to make these two psalms the subject of Bible study right at this time, when the security of the Church of Christ is seriously threatened and reason is aggressively seeking to usurp the place of divine verities.

Studies in the Psalter contains 144 pages, 5×7³/₈, is neatly bound in silk pattern buckram cloth, and costs \$1.25.

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